

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1 NEW YORK TIMES
18 July 1985

Israel Rejecting Palestinian List For U.S. Talks

Names Given by Arafat Relayed by Americans

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

Special to The New York Times

JERUSALEM, July 17 — The United States today conveyed to Israel a list of Palestinians whom Yasir Arafat has suggested as possible members of a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation that could hold preparatory Middle East peace talks with the United States. Israel immediately rejected the list.

Israeli officials said the list, which the State Department has been examining for several days, was delivered this afternoon by the American chargé d'affaires, Robert Flatten, to Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir. The list was given to the United States by Jordan.

On a late-evening interview program Mr. Peres was asked if he found the Palestinians on the list acceptable for participation in any kind of negotiations. He said: "No. But I don't know yet whether it is acceptable to the United States. The United States has not replied yet whether this list is acceptable to her."

'I Ask a Simple Question'

"Moreover," Mr. Peres went on, "I told Shultz and Reagan that I see no reason why the United States should meet separately before negotiations with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to coordinate positions. I ask a simple question: Imagine how the Israeli public would feel if they heard that there was prior coordination without them."

King Hussein of Jordan had proposed that as a prelude to any talks between Israel and the Arabs, the United States meet with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation as a "confidence-building" measure. Because no Palestinians will take part without P.L.O. approval, the Palestinian component in the delegation was left for Mr. Arafat, the leader of the P.L.O., to determine.

The United States had told Israel that the purpose of any talks between it and

such a joint delegation would be to pave the way for direct talks and that the Palestinians included in the first phase might not necessarily be those who would end up at the negotiating table in direct talks.

7 Names Reported on List

The Israeli officials declined to disclose any of the listed names, which Israeli television said numbered seven. But Mr. Peres and other senior officials indicated that the list was objectionable for two reasons.

First, no Palestinians from the Israeli-occupied West Bank or Gaza Strip were included, according to the Israeli radio. Mr. Arafat, Israeli officials say, apparently wants residents of the West Bank and Gaza to take part as observers only.

Arab political analysts say they believe the P.L.O. leader may not have wanted to name any West Bank or Gaza residents for fear that if the negotiations should fall apart such people might nonetheless be elevated and legitimized to such a degree that they could feel free to enter into talks with Israel on their own, without the P.L.O. The Palestinian organization has always made certain that the West Bank residents do not form an independent negotiating body.

Second, all but one of those on the list were members of the Palestine National Council, which serves in effect as a parliament for the Palestine Liberation Organization, Israeli television said. The one other figure was understood to be a prominent P.L.O. official with a very "high profile," Israeli television reported. The others were less well known.

"What I can say about the delegation is not that I was surprised by who was in it but that I was surprised by who was not," said Mr. Peres, who convened a meeting of his 10-member inner Cabinet to discuss the list earlier in the day.

The Israeli Position

Given Israel's already stated refusal to enter into negotiations with any Palestinians connected with the P.L.O. or the Palestine National Council, or to sanction a meeting between the United States and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation if it should include P.L.O. or P.N.C. members, the list the Government was presented today had little chance of approval.

Nonetheless, it is understood that Israeli military intelligence has begun to check out those named in the list and will now be an analysis on the back-

ground of each one so Israel can formally respond to Washington.

Israeli officials said that despite the fact that members of the Palestine National Council, and at least one P.L.O. official, were on the list, the Americans had not rejected it out of hand.

"They have solicited Israel's opinion but not offered it a veto," the television reported, quoting senior officials.

Israeli television reported that the United States tried to get an assurance from King Hussein that if it did meet with such a delegation it would be as a prelude to direct talks between the Arabs and Israel. While King Hussein tried to persuade Mr. Arafat to agree to such a proposal, he failed to do so, the television reported.

Freezing Out the P.L.O.

The mood in Jerusalem tonight seemed to be that Mr. Arafat had produced a list of names that could be acceptable to Jordan and maybe the United States, but never to Israel.

Even before the list had arrived Mr. Peres seemed to be turning his attention to trying to encourage West Bank leaders to enter into talks with Israel and Jordan and to freeze out the P.L.O.

Late Tuesday night the Prime Minister held three hours of talks in his home with Mayor Elias M. Freij of Bethlehem and Hikmat al-Masri of Nablus, Deputy Speaker of the Jordanian Senate. According to Israeli officials, they discussed Arab-Israeli topics, the economic situation in the West Bank and the P.L.O. list.

Mr. Peres indicated this evening that the meeting could be interpreted as "a signal that the Government of Israel is ready to talk to recognized representatives from the territories who are not terrorists." He added, "We are not ready to sit at a table with terrorists."

No Direct Ties to P.L.O.

By meeting with Mr. Freij and Mr. Masri, both noted Palestinian "moderates" not directly associated with the P.L.O., the Israeli Prime Minister was indicating to Washington and Amman the kind of Palestinians he would like to see across the negotiating table, Israeli officials said.

Israeli officials said the meeting with the West Bank leaders was also intended to signal to the Israeli public and to foreigners that Israel, after two months of being preoccupied with southern Lebanon, the Beirut hostage crisis and the economy, was ready to move again on the questions of improving relations with Egypt and initiating direct negotiations with a Palestinian-Jordanian delegation.

The meeting at the Prime Minister's Jerusalem residence was carried out in secrecy.